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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000254

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PINR KDEM IZ IR

SUBJECT: MAYSAN SADRIST HUSSEIN IDEOLOGY FRONT TO SUPPORT SADRIST TREND-BACKED CANDIDATE LISTS

REF: 08 BAGHDAD 2806

Classified By: Acting DCM Robert Ford. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) This is a Maysan PRT reporting cable.

¶2. (C) Summary: Maysan Sadrists-affiliated Hussein Ideology Front (HIF) party official and Provincial Council (PC) member Mohammed Wahid told the PRT on January 28 that HIF would support three Sadrists lists in the provincial elections: the two OMS/Sadrists Trend preferred national candidate lists and Kafaat al Maysan, a Maysan party running on a moderate technocrat and reconstruction platform. Mohammed predicted that Sadrists would win one third of the 27 PC seats. He reiterated HIF support for USG reconstruction and security efforts, but cautioned that Coalition Forces (CF) must continue to defuse Maysanis' perception that joint CF/ISF security operations are politically motivated and unfairly target Sadrists. Mohammed said he would not seek re-election to the PC, but stay on as a political advisor to HIF. He commended outgoing Sadrists Governor Adel Mohder al-Maliki for his leadership, and suggested the PRT and provincial government hold a ceremony to honor departing officials and welcome new provincial council members. Now certain of the U.S. departure, Sadrists provincial officials have shown a mounting propensity to encourage USG assistance to fill in provincial and GOI funding gaps and enhance human capacity. End Summary.

HIF Support for Sadrists Lists 284, 376, and 390

¶3. (C) The PRT met with Sadrists HIF party official and PC member Mohammed Wahid on January 28 at FOB Garry Owen. Mohammed, accompanied by Provincial Director of Reconstruction and Development Zaid Khalaf al-Hoshi, said HIF would support the two OMS/Sadrists Trend preferred national candidate lists - Tayar al-AQar (Free Independent Trend list 284/registration 821) and Nizaha wa Bina (Integrity and Construction list 376/registration 731) in addition to Zaid's party, Kafaat al Maysan (Maysan Competencies list 390/registration 856), in the provincial elections. Mohammed boasted that Sadrists have selected knowledgeable, experienced candidates who are committed to service and lack overt militia ties. He predicted that Sadrists would win one third of the 27 PC seats.

Continued Support for USG Assistance/Interaction

¶4. (C) Mohammed reiterated that HIF continued to support USG-led reconstruction and capacity-building efforts in Maysan, and singled out Zaid as playing a major role to publicly promote what the USG has done to help Maysan. (reftel) He described communication between the PRT and Sadrists as "serious and honest," and emphasized that continuous dialogue is necessary.

Security Concerns Linger

¶ 15. (C) Mohammed said it was an ongoing struggle to convince Maysanis that Coalition Forces (CF) are not occupiers. He admitted, "There is no mistake there are things for which Iraqis should accept the blame versus blaming the Americans," referring to security incidents. As in previous engagements, he cautioned that CF needs to avoid the widespread perception that Iraqi Security Forces/CF joint security operations are politically motivated and unfairly target Sadrists. Team Leader (TL) agreed that the USG/Sadrist relationship had improved dramatically, and encouraged Sadrists to be part of the security process and work with the ISF/CF to identify criminal elements. TL also encouraged the Sadrists to improve their poor relationship with the ISF. (Comment: Sadrist provincial officials and the ISF have a tense if not hostile relationship stemming from numerous arrests of Sadrist officials during Operation Good Tidings of Peace in June 2008. End Comment.)

Wahid Not Seeking Re-election

¶ 16. (C) Mohammed told TL that he would not seek another term on the PC, complaining that it was like a "tight fitting shirt, which he can no longer stand." He said he will continue to advise HIF and work with the party to open an institute to educate Maysanis on the political process.

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Hail and Farewell for Provincial Officials

¶ 17. (C) Mohammed commended outgoing Sadrist Governor Adel Mohder al-Maliki for his service to Maysan, praising him for his leadership, budget execution, and for building a positive relationship with the PRT. He suggested to TL that the provincial government and PRT hold a joint ceremony honoring departing officials and welcoming new provincial council members.

Comment

¶ 18. (C) Recent engagements with more moderate Sadrist contacts indicate a wider Sadrist receptivity to the USG presence in Maysan and an ostensible attitude shift. Now certain of the U.S. departure, Sadrist provincial officials have shown a mounting propensity to encourage USG assistance to fill in provincial and GOI funding gaps and enhance human capacity. While many non-Sadrist PRT contacts are confident that Maysanis' will express dissatisfaction with the Sadrist provincial officials' performance at the polls, there may be some credence to the Sadrists' belief that they will again win thirty-five to forty percent of provincial council seats.
End Comment.

CROCKER